

Educator Self-Reflection and PGES

Article written by Joe Harris

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In an era of education reform, much emphasis has been placed on teacher self-reflection. Whether it is the PLC model offered by Dufour or the research laid out in the MET Study, researchers are building reform around reflective practice. One aspect of the Kentucky Teacher Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (TPGES) I find promising is that all of the measures and components allow for teacher reflection in the growth process. ***So why is it important for educators to reflect? When is it appropriate to reflect over our practice? How does one go about reflection?*** While I could spout off quotes from research to answer all these questions, wouldn't you rather hear from reflective educators who spend their days in the trenches, proving that reflection is important?



Recently I had a conversation with a few teachers about reflective educators. When speaking with Allison Hunt, 2013 High School Kentucky Teacher of the Year, I asked her why she felt reflection is important in the classroom. Her detailed response shows why teachers should



reflect, “...because reflection makes you pause and really analyze how to improve your practice. If we don't reflect then we really don't know if we are being effective.” When asked what it is important for teachers to focus on when reflecting, she stated, “Teachers should reflect on engagement level of students (number engaged, gaps in engagement), how they know whether or not students “got it,” the questions they asked along with responses received, and of course in general how they could more effectively teach the lesson concept(s) next time.”

Another reflective educator with a proven track record in the classroom that not only impacted a number of students, but also a number of teachers is Janice Salyer. She is now a Guidance Counselor, but was a high school English and history teacher and later a District Teacher Coach. She offered an insightful response to the questions I asked surrounding teaching reflection: “I believe reflection is **intentional, mindful, and purposeful**. The **intentional reflection** involves reviewing the formative and/or summative assessment to determine next steps. **Mindful reflection** means it is deliberate with the purpose of improving student learning through student and teacher actions alike. Reflection is **purposeful** ONLY when completed with student achievement in mind.”

Janice made a good point about why reflection isn't as powerful for some educators as others when she said, “Teachers who “reflect” because it is required only go through the motions half-heartedly and generally never use the reflection to improve student achievement.” Some other powerful quotes from the conversation include, “The best example of reflection on practice is seen in sports. Reflective coaches are always reflecting on the plays, the game tapes, and the practices. Reflective teachers reflect on their plays (lessons including formative and/or summative assessment that is congruent to the instructional standard/I Can statement). Reflective teachers reflect on their practices by continuously learning new strategies, updated best practices, and the curriculum. True teachers review the game tapes by reviewing the formative assessment or summative assessment results to plan for the next move (next lesson).”

Finally I spoke with Kimberly Fitch, our Literacy Interventionist at my school. My favorite part of the conversation was her use of a simile to describe teachers who do not reflect (yes, I'm an English dork), “A teacher who doesn't reflect would be like a dull, scratched mirror. You can see an image but there isn't any depth or clarity.” Wow, what truth in that statement! She also offered a great thought when she said, “In all areas, a teacher should reflect: grouping, learning styles, timing, routines, tone of voice, rigor, motivation, differentiation, flow of lesson, professional growth, environment, etc. I reflect daily, but my major reflections occur during extended breaks.”



After all three conversations, I thought about how I reflect and what tools I could offer to those who might be interested in adding more reflection to his/her practice. Like Allison I believe that student engagement is an area I must reflect over before I can be effective. I do this in various ways, but the most powerful I have found so far is through student surveys. If I find that students are tuning me out, I will informally survey them by asking questions such as: “Okay guys, what isn’t working here?” From their responses I will make adjustments to make the lesson more engaging. Also, I use Twitter polls to gather feedback from students and use surveys to reflect over engagement levels. Primarily, I use these at midterm and 9 week grading periods. I discussed these types of surveys in a previous blog when I used a survey given by Kimberly Fitch. If you don’t want to flip back to that blog, here are some questions I have asked before:

1. **Do you feel I care about you? (This is important because I believe kids who believe we don’t care, won’t engage.)**
2. **Do you feel challenged in this class? (This is important because if they don’t feel challenged, they will get bored.)**
3. **What suggestions would you offer to make this class more fun or engaging? (Students love to have voice in classroom decisions.)**



I'm excited to see my student voice perception data from the TPGES student voice survey administered in March through the Kentucky Department of Education. As part of the TPGES system, I will be using this to reflect over some of my own growth areas.

Some tools and research for student surveys:

I have heard much about this site, but haven't had the chance to use it yet. If anyone currently uses it, let me know what you think: <http://www.socrative.com/>

Research--

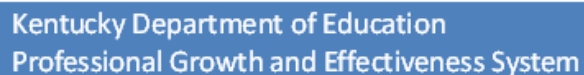
http://www.metproject.org/downloads/Asking_Students_Practitioner_Brief.pdf

In daily reflections I review formative and summative data for each class and determine next steps in my lesson planning to meet the needs of all students. My district actually has an area built into the lesson-planning template for English Language Arts and Math content areas to record this data and to make notes regarding lesson modification. I keep my notes here:

Formative/Summative Assessment results and student names (who needs tier-1 intervention).		Differentiation and Lesson Modifications (teacher reflection) for tomorrow's learning based on today's student achievement (What do they understand/what will you do now/what are you doing for your students that "got it"?). Specific 3Tier-1 Strategy:
Student Names	Results/Points Possible	

The cells expand so you can add more student names. I don't put all 130 students on here, just those who are struggling. The others I keep track of on the "I Can Statement" sheet

Like Janice, I keep track of the daily "I Can Statements" and whether or not students got it for the day. I do this by using a blank spreadsheet with each student's name and an area to record a 4, 3, 2, or 1. 4= Mastered, 3= Not mastered, but close. 2 = Moving toward mastery, but needs much support. 1= Not mastered, needs major intervention. I use these anecdotal tracking



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Section: 145300-7 English III
Teacher: Harris, Joseph Pernell

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This is actually a blank spreadsheet roster printed from Infinite Campus, our state's electronic Gradebook and attendance system. The learning targets are written at the top of each column and student names in each row.



For formative assessment and differentiation ideas, visit these sites:

25 Quick Formative Assessments—

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDIQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.marylandlearninglinks.org%2F939%2Fresource_id%3A17301%2Fresources_sub%3Arh%2Fhash%3A757f84c616b96d869349f61125e0556a%2Fjsd%3Aajax%2F&ei=HoZRqOYeN3AWNh4GQDQ&usg=AFQjCNFwjYhnlxRDpal41QTk76y9CcVWw&sig2=A8KmFEkGw_dPIJv_mk0cxA&bvm=bv.65058239,d.b2l

Differentiation—

http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Teacher_s_Guide/

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/101043/chapters/The-How-To%27s-of-Planning-Lessons-Differentiated-by-Learning-Profile.aspx>

<http://www.hartfordhustlers.net/caring.pdf>

Let me leave you with this thought: Like several other teachers in my district, my students work with me to use these questions in reflecting over data analysis from summative assessments and the Plan/Do/Study/Act process. Together we determine what worked and what didn't in each unit:

1. What does this set of data tell us?
2. What does this set of data not tell us?
3. What is an area of celebration?
4. What are the needs for improvement?
5. What are our next steps?

Posted 18th April 2014 by [Joseph Harris](#)